

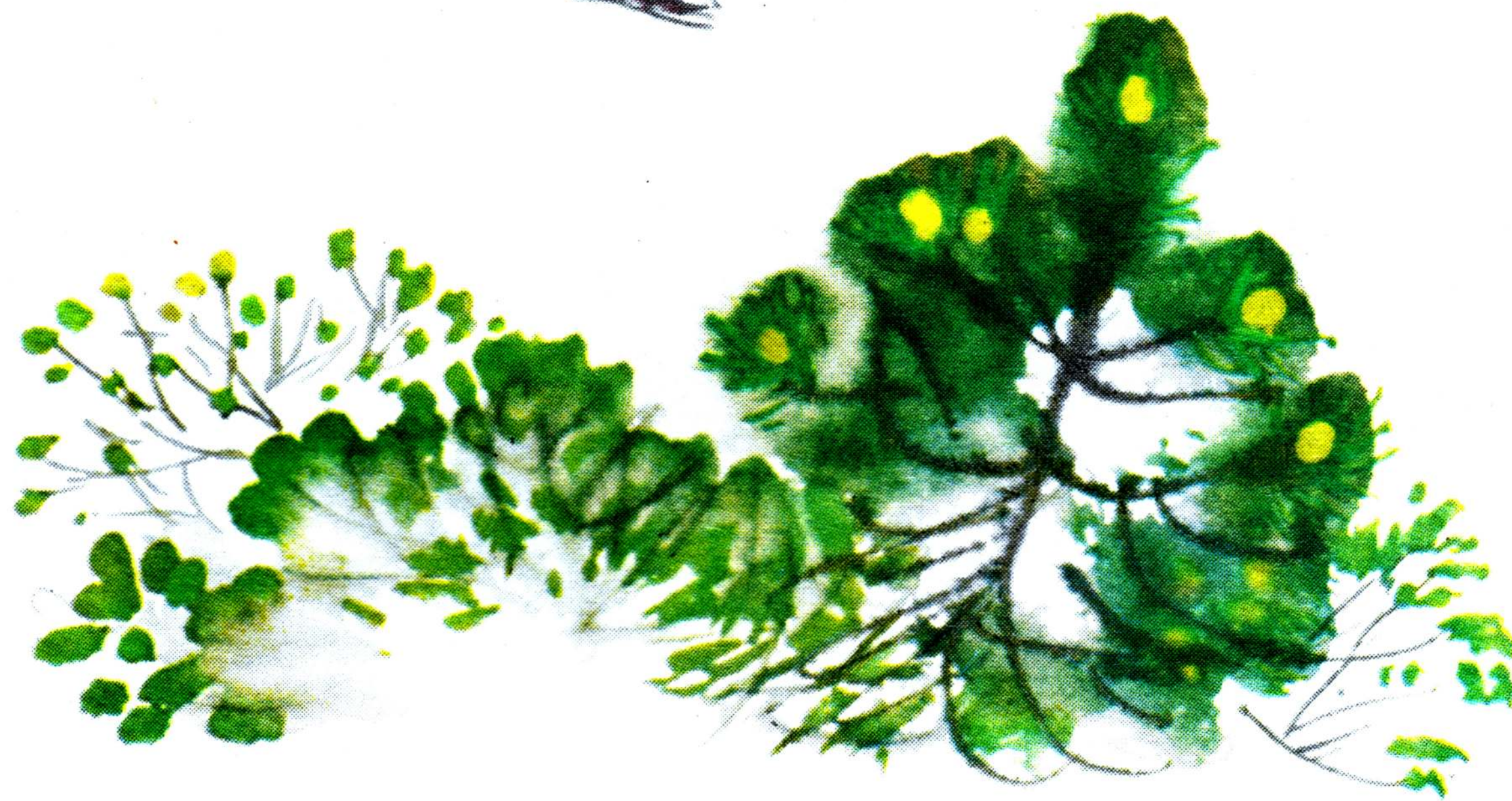
VITALI BIANKI



THE LITTLE HOUSE



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There once stood an oak tree in the forest. A fat, fat one. Old, very old.
A woodpecker flew in – bright red cap, sharp beak!

Tap-tap, hop-hop up the trunk – Knock-knock, peck-peck – he tapped,
he listened, And began to peck a hole. He pecked and pecked and
pecked – Until he carved out a deep hollow.

He lived there all summer, raised his chicks, and flew away.



Right, so, the Starling heard all about that lovely hollow! He saw it with his own eyes: a perfect hole in the oak tree. "Why, it's just the ticket for a little home!" he thought.

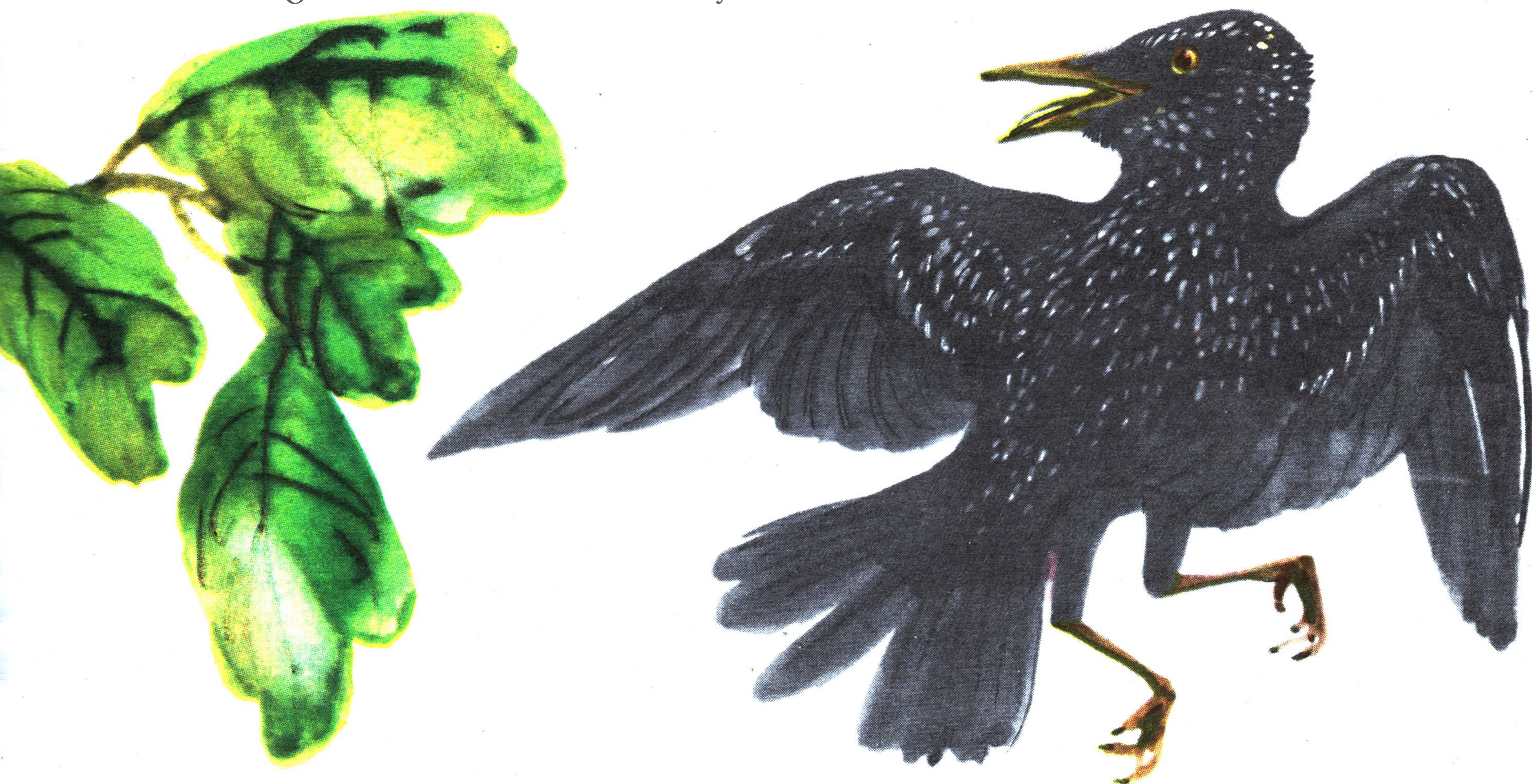
So, he asked, "Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

Nobody answered from the hollow, the little house was empty. The Starling then brought in lots of hay and straw into the hollow, and he started living there and bringing up his little ones. He lived there for a year, then another year – the old oak tree was getting drier and crumbly; the hollow got bigger, and the hole got wider.

In the third year, a yellow-eyed Owl found out about that hollow. He flew over. He saw it – an oak tree with a hole as big as a cat's head!

He asked, "Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

"Well, the colourful Woodpecker with the pointy nose used to live here," said the starling, "but now it's me – the Starling, the best singer in the grove! And who are you?"



"I'm the Owl. If you get in my claws, don't you dare whimper! I'll fly in at night – snip! – and gobble you up! You'd better get out of this house while you're still in one piece!"

The Starling got a real fright from the Owl and flew away. The Owl didn't bother bringing anything in; he just lived in the hollow as it was, on his own feathers.

He lived there for a year, then another year – and the old oak tree kept crumbling, making the hollow even wider. On the third year, a Squirrel found out about the hollow. She scurried over. She saw it – an oak tree with a hole as big as a dog's head!

She asked, "Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

"Well, the colourful Woodpecker with the pointy nose used to live here," said the Owl, "then the Starling – the best singer in the grove, and now it's me – the Owl. If you get in my claws, don't you dare whimper! And who are you?"

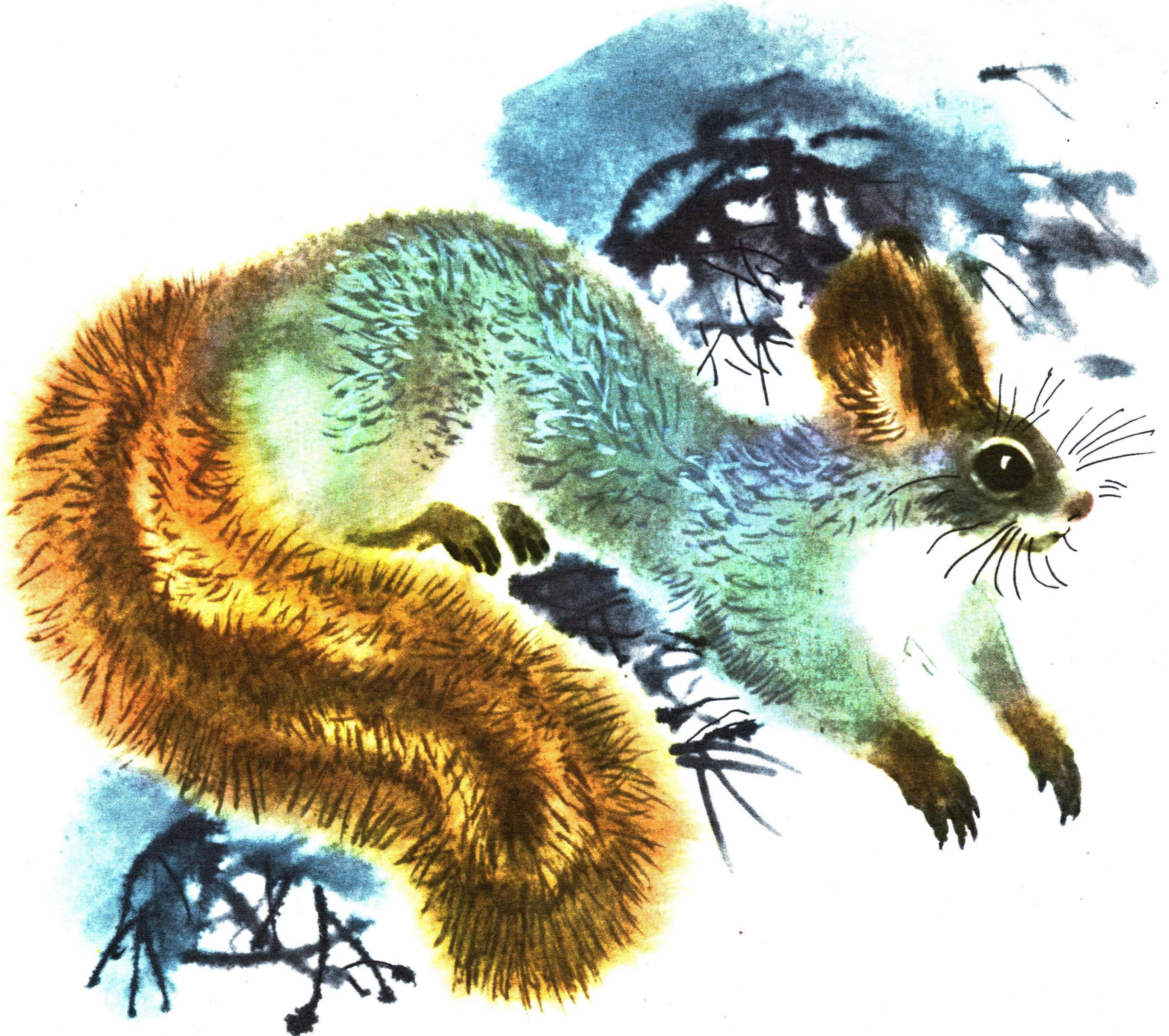
"I'm the Squirrel – a springer on the branches and a sitter in the hollows! My teeth are long and sharp, just like needles! You'd better get out of this house while you're still in one piece!"

The Owl got a fright from the Squirrel and flew away. The Squirrel then gathered up some moss and started living in the hollow. She lived there for a year, then another year – and the old oak tree kept crumbling, making the hollow even wider.









On the third year, a Marten found out about that hollow. She scampered over and saw it – an oak tree with a hole as big as a human head! She asked, "Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

"Well, the colourful Woodpecker with the pointy nose used to live here," said the Squirrel. "Then the Starling – the best singer in the grove, and then the Owl – if you get in his claws, don't you dare whimper! But now it's me – the Squirrel, a springer on the branches and a sitter in the hollows! And who are you?"

"I'm the Marten – a killer of all small creatures! I'm scarier than a Polecat, so don't you argue with me for no good reason! You'd better get out of this house while you're still in one piece!" The Squirrel got a fright from the Marten and scurried away.

The Marten didn't bother bringing anything in; she just lived in the hollow as it was, on her own fur. She lived there for a year, then another year – and the old oak tree kept crumbling, making the hollow even wider.

On the third year, a whole swarm of bees found out about that hollow. They flew over. They saw it – an oak tree with a hole as big as a horse's head! They buzzed and whizzed around, asking:
"Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

"Well, the colourful Woodpecker with the pointy nose used to live here," said the Marten. "Then the Starling – the best singer in the grove, then the Owl – if you get in his claws, don't you dare whimper, and then the Squirrel – a springer on the branches and a sitter in the hollows. But now it's me – the Marten, a killer of all small creatures! And who are you lot?"



"We're a swarm of bees – we stick together like glue! We buzz and we whiz, we sting and we threaten, big and small alike! You'd better get out of this house while you're still in one piece!"

The Marten got a fright from the bees and ran off.

The bees then brought in lots of wax and started living in the hollow. They lived there for a year, then another year – and the old oak tree kept crumbling, making the hollow even wider.

On the third year, a Bear found out about that hollow. He lumbered over. He saw it – an oak tree with a massive hole, as big as a whole window! He asked:

"Little house, little house, who lives in this little house?"

"Well, the colourful Woodpecker with the pointy nose used to live here," said the bees. "Then the Starling – the best singer in the grove, then the Owl – if you get in his claws, don't you dare whimper, then the Squirrel – a springer on the branches and a sitter in the hollows, and then the Marten – a killer of all small creatures. But now it's us living here – a swarm of bees – we stick together like glue! And who are you?"

"Why, I'm the Bear, old Bruin!" he rumbled. "And your little house is done for!"

He clambered up the oak tree, stuck his head into the hollow, and gave it a mighty push! The old oak tree split right in two, and out of it – just imagine how many years it had been collecting – came fur, and hay, and wax, and moss, and fluff, and feathers, and dust – and poof!

The little house was no more!







For Preschoolers
Vitaly Valentinovich Bianki
THE LITTLE HOUSE
A Picture Book



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